

WILDLIFE SERVICES

Predators and other wildlife pose a significant threat to agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety. The San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner's Office provides partial funding and office resources for two USDA Wildlife Specialists. These individual provide professional service to the community in the form of information, advice, equipment, materials, as well as direct assistance in handling wildlife issues.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WILDLIFE SERVICES

Everyday California residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on California Wildlife Services (WS) for its expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, professional, and selective strategies to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife.

California is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, forests, and desert environments. With more than 33 million residents, and a population growth rate higher than the national average, human interactions with wildlife are expected to increase over time as people encroach on both agricultural property and wildlife habitat.

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Livestock from Predators – In addition to the many factors that cause economic hardships for livestock producers, predators like coyotes, bears, and mountain lions cause additional and sometimes significant losses by attacking sheep, cattle, and goats. It is estimated that in California and other Western States, about 75 percent of WS' cooperative agreements are with small farmers and ranchers. The National Agricultural Statistics Service has estimated California's livestock losses due to predator attack in the millions of dollars. Research results suggest these figures could be 2 to 3 times higher in the absence of an effective livestock protection program.

Protecting Threatened or Endangered Species - Habitat destruction and human encroachment are long-term threats to California's large number of threatened and endangered species. Predators ranging from feral cats to nonnative species like red foxes, and even native species like raccoons, coyotes, striped skunks, and raptors threaten these species.

For more than a decade, the California WS program has been involved in a number of projects to protect threatened and endangered species. In fiscal year 2002, WS conducted projects to protect 7 bird species, the California red-legged frog, the salt marsh harvest mouse, and the Sierra Nevada big horn sheep, just to name a few. In nearly all cases, the projects resulted in the threatened or endangered species populations being maintained or increased.

California Wildlife Service Funding – In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators, such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

To learn more about California WS, visit - <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/ca/>